

Rental Ordinance Review Committee Meeting  
of the City of La Salle  
September 9, 2014  
1:00 p.m. - City Hall Council Chambers

Meeting opened at 1:03 p.m.

Moved by Alderman Demes and seconded by Alderman Reynolds to elect Alderman John Lavieri as chairman.

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Demes, Bacidore, Reynolds NAYS: Herndon ABSTAIN: Lavieri  
Motion Carried 3-1

Present-Alderman Demes, Bacidore, Lavieri, Herndon

Others present- Building Inspector, Chris Covert, City Engineer, Brian Brown, Chief Rob Uranich, Chief Andy Bacidore, Finance Director, John Duncan, Superintendent of Public Works, Jeff Bumgarner, News Tribune Reporter

Late Arrivals-Mayor Jeff Grove, Attorney Jim McPhedran

Absent-

A quorum was present.

The meeting was turned over to Chris Covert. Mr. Covert explained that 30% of households (1,100) in La Salle are rental units. This makes the job of conducting inspections very difficult. Mr. Covert indicated that he had sent several proposed solutions to the committee members to review. One solution was similar to that used in Baltimore County, Maryland. Prior to a rental license being issued to a landlord, a home inspection must be completed by a licensed home inspector at the expense of the landlord. Discussion followed and questions were posed regarding how the process potentially could work. Alderman Bacidore suggested that the City could hire someone to do inspections, work closely with Chris Covert allowing the City to retain a portion of the inspection fee.

Alderman Demes indicated that this inspector would need a detailed checklist of what the City required. Alderman Herndon expressed concern about the legality of inspecting Section 8 housing. Attorney McPhedran will double check, but he believes a municipality can go above and beyond the Section 8 inspection requirements.

Mr. Covert explained that enforcing the inspection requirement could be painful initially, but would have long term benefits to the City. Initially, he predicts approximately 7-12% of landlords will not be able to bring their rentals up to code, leaving an increase in vacant properties.

Alderman Demes expressed concern that implementing this type of system may hurt good landlords. He indicated we need to stiffen our enforcement of current policies and had concerns about the amount of vacancies that could result from this new system. Demes stated that landlords ignore regulations now, so how do we enforce this?

Mr. Covert told the Alderman and those on the committee that he is open to any ideas or suggestions and ultimately any action is up to the will of the council. At this time, Mr. Covert stated that we can continue to proceed on complaint based action.

The Committee asked Mr. Covert to compile a list of problem rental properties and investigate average fees to hire a home inspector through an outside firm.

Fire Chief Andy Bacidore suggested possibly utilizing off duty firefighters from surrounding communities to perform inspections under Mr. Covert's supervision. Many of these firefighters are looking for supplemental income on their days off. Discussion followed which included concerns about the city's liability if not using an outside firm.

Chief Rob Uranich expressed his concerns that if we cannot handle our current volume of issues, how we will handle a large increase in volume post inspections.

Attorney McPhedran stated that the city must decide how aggressive it wants to be and stated that this is a problem that is not unique to La Salle.

It was decided the next meeting of the Rental Ordinance Committee will be formally announced at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, September 9, 2014, but tentatively will be held on Wednesday, October 1 at 7:00 p.m. allowing the public to attend and allowing time to notify the public on their water bills.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

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Carrie Brown, City Clerk